

Draft

Ma-le'l Dunes Cooperative Management Area Public Access Plan

January 2007

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Acronym List

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATV	All Terrain Vehicle
BLM	United States Department of Interior-Bureau of Land Management
CalDAG	California Disabled Accessibility Guidebook
CCC	California Conservation Corps
CCP	Comprehensive Conservation Plan
CCT	California Coastal Trail
CDC	California Department of Corrections
CDF	California Department of Forestry
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CMA	Cooperative Management Area
CNLM	Center for Natural Lands Management
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
EA	Environmental Assessment
EEM	Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation
FOD	Friends of the Dunes
FONSI	Finding Of No Significant Impact
GIS	Geographic Information System
HAF	Humboldt Area Foundation
HBMWD	Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District
HCBDMF	Humboldt County Beach and Dunes Management Plan
HDO	High-Density Overlay Plywood
HSU	Humboldt State University
IS	Initial Study
LP	Louisiana Pacific
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
MHHW	Mean High, High Water
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA	National Oceanographic Atmospheric Association
NWRC	National Wildlife Refuge Complex
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
PG & E	Pacific Gas and Electric
RCAA	Redwood Community Action Agency
RGC	Redwood Gun Club
SCC	State Coastal Conservancy
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SPI	Sierra Pacific Industries
TBR	Table Bluff Reservation
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USACOE	United States Army Corps Of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Executive Summary

This Ma-le'l Dunes Public Access (Plan) was prepared for the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) in order to facilitate the cooperative development of the proposed Ma-le'l Dunes Cooperative Management Area (CMA) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This area consists of approximately 444 acres of public land owned by the two agencies along a mile and a half of coastline within the Humboldt Bay dune system. It contains significant cultural resources and a unique association of coastal dune, wetland and estuarine ecosystems and it is bordered by a number of different land uses, including a public shooting range and an active timber mill.

The entire Ma-le'l Dunes CMA will be open for hiking and associated activities, including scenic and wildlife viewing and photography. Ma-le'l South, owned by BLM and occupying 154 acres, is also open to the public for horseback riding and dog walking, as well as seasonal vegetation gathering and traditional gathering by special permit. Ma-le'l North, owned by USFWS and occupying 290 acres, will also be open to the public for canoe and kayak landing and launching and traditional gathering. Off-highway vehicle use and firearms will continue to be prohibited throughout the CMA.

This document contains an evaluation of existing access facilities throughout the proposed Ma-le'l Dunes CMA, including recent improvements on Ma-le'l South. It also presents a series of recommendations to improve safe and orderly public access throughout the area. The recommendations address the installation and/or upgrade of roads and parking areas, coastal access trails and trail amenities, informational and interpretive signing, and publications. The recommendations will serve as the basis for construction drawings, a signing program, educational and interpretive publications, interagency collaboration, and future funding requests. Subsequent to a completed environmental review process and the receipt of the required permits from appropriate agencies, public safety components of the Plan will be implemented first, as Phase One improvements. Phase Two improvements will enhance the experience of visitors to the area and will be implemented as funding allows.

To facilitate cooperation and coordinated management for public access between BLM and USFWS, the agencies will need to enter into one or more interagency agreements. Separate cooperative agreements may be necessary to delineate services between the two agencies and the large landholding entities adjacent to the CMA. These agreements will facilitate interim public use prior to the completion of the USFWS Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the BLM Resource Management Plan Amendment.



The dynamic nature of the dune system can clearly be seen at the slip face of moving dunes".

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1.0 Introduction

Funded by a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), HWR Engineering and Science conducted an assessment of the existing access facilities and created this Ma-le'l Dunes Cooperative Management Area Public Access Plan (Plan) in order to recommend improvements that will assist the BLM and USFWS in cooperatively developing and managing their respective properties within the project area for public access. This Plan presents the proposed improvements as a coordinated, cooperative plan that reflects the goals, priorities, and timelines of each agency.

At the heart of this project is a desire by the local community, the agency landholders, and the SCC to have the public experience the unique natural diversity contained within the project area and to appreciate the cultural heritage of the local Wiyot Indian people who have inhabited the Humboldt Bay region for over a thousand years. It is hoped that by experiencing the area and learning about it, the local community and other visitors will become good stewards of the area and will help to preserve its unique diversity for generations of north coast residents to enjoy.



Photo by Andrea Pickart

As the dunes move, they bury old forests creating a landscape of "skeleton trees."

1.2 Project Goals and Objectives

The BLM and USFWS have similar goals for the area, which are to protect the natural and cultural resources of the area and provide public access for recreation, education and research activities. These goals are consistent with the goals of the SCC, which are to "protect, restore and enhance coastal resources and to provide access to the shore."

The goal of this Plan is to propose actions that will accommodate safe, orderly, and open public public access throughout the 444 acre Ma-le'l Dunes CMA and a range of recreational opportunities that minimize to the extent practicable any adverse impacts to the natural and cultural resources of the area. To realize this goal, the Plan has the following objectives:

- Recommend public access facility improvements necessary to support recreational activities such as hiking, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, dog walking, horseback riding, and ADA accessibility;
- Incorporate provisions for the safety and well being of visitors to the area;
- Minimize impacts to native dune plant communities, coastal wetland habitat, salt marsh habitat, populations of endangered Humboldt Bay wallflower and beach layia, and cultural resources;
- Recommend interpretive, informational signing, such that the visitor

has a unique experience when visiting the BLM and USFWS properties;

- Recommend interpretive information that fosters public awareness and appreciation of the area's natural and cultural resources via local publications, educational brochures, and wayside exhibits;
- Intensively manage for increased visitor use levels over the next ten years;
- Suggest format and content of cooperative management agreements between agencies and organizations involved in planning, management, enforcement, biological research, and public outreach;
- Identify strategies for implementing and maintaining public access to the area;
- Identify potential sources of funding for recommended infrastructure improvements.



Open sands will have unrestricted pedestrian access.

1.3 Project Scope

Aside from the 42-acre BLM Buggy Club/Khoaghali parcel and the areas of open sand where off road vehicles were previously permitted, the area contained within the proposed Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is approximately the same area previously known as the Mad River Slough and Dunes CMA, which was open from 1990 to 1994. During that time, the area was managed for public pedestrian access, public education, and resource protection. Access elements included an access road, a parking area, a caretaker, public trails, a trail brochure and educational programs. Public access was based on the agreement between The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Louisiana-Pacific (LP), and BLM. The recreational public use levels, programs, and activities that are proposed for the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA are very similar to these pre-existing uses of the area.

Recommendations contained within this Plan are in many cases a result of deferred maintenance to the roads and trails that were used when the area was previously open. In some cases the recommendations are intended to increase public access throughout the area, or to enhance the infrastructure already in place. The recommendations are conceptual with detail adequate to begin construction drawings, initiate the permit process, or begin graphic layout. A topographic survey was conducted and topographic map produced to assist in the design and implementation phase of work.

1.3.1 Project Area

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is located approximately one mile north of the unincorporated town of Manila, in Humboldt County, California, on the north spit of Humboldt Bay (also known as the Samoa Peninsula). It is approximately three miles west of the City of Arcata and five miles north of Eureka. It is west of the Mad River Slough, generally north of the Mad River Slough Bridge on Hwy 255, and south of the Lanphere Dunes Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC). Adjacent properties are occupied by Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), which is an active timber mill, the Redwood Gun Club (RGC), which is a public shooting range, and a group of residential properties. The project site location map is illustrated in Figure 1-1. The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is illustrated in Figure 1-2.

The CMA comprises 444 acres along approximately one and a half miles of coastline and contains areas owned by two federal agencies. BLM owns and manages the southern 154 acres of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA. This portion is known throughout this document as Ma-le'l South; it consists of the 112-acre Manila Dunes Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a 42-acre property formerly owned by the Humboldt Buggy and ATV Association (a.k.a. Buggy Club) which was formerly known as the Khoaghali parcel. USFWS owns and manages the northern 290 acres of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA. This portion is known throughout this document as Ma-le'l North, and includes the newly created Ma-le'l Dunes Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Humboldt Bay NWRC). It is comprised of the 130-acre Fernstrom-Root property, (formerly part of the Lanphere Dunes Unit of Humboldt Bay NWRC), a 160-acre property formerly owned by the Buggy Club, and includes a one-mile stretch of roadway.

1.3.2 Plan Content and Organization

Chapter 2 describes the setting of the planning area, including the site conditions, land use history, legal aspects and other local plans affecting the area. Chapter 3 describes the existing uses and the status of existing infrastructure throughout the area. Chapter 4 contains a brief description of the estimated levels of use the area is expected to receive and then describes the recreational uses or land use allocations that will be allowed for the area and the access improvements to accommodate such use. Chapter 5 presents operations and management strategies for managing public access, including interagency and private partner coordination and interagency agreements, visitor management, security and enforcement, maintenance responsibilities, and other considerations. Chapter 6 describes phased implementation strategies and includes a schedule, and a list of potential funding sources.

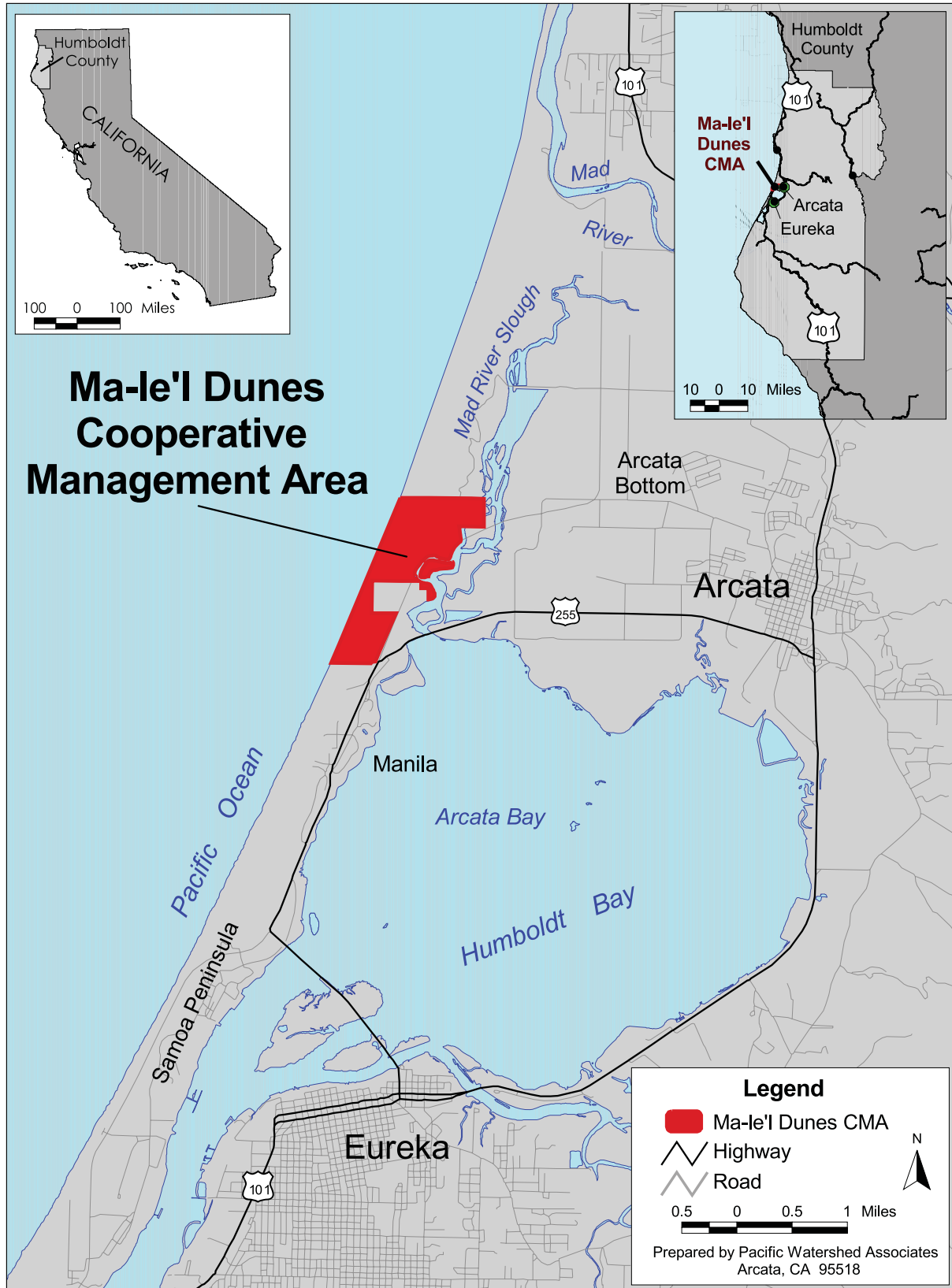


Figure 1-1. Site Location Map

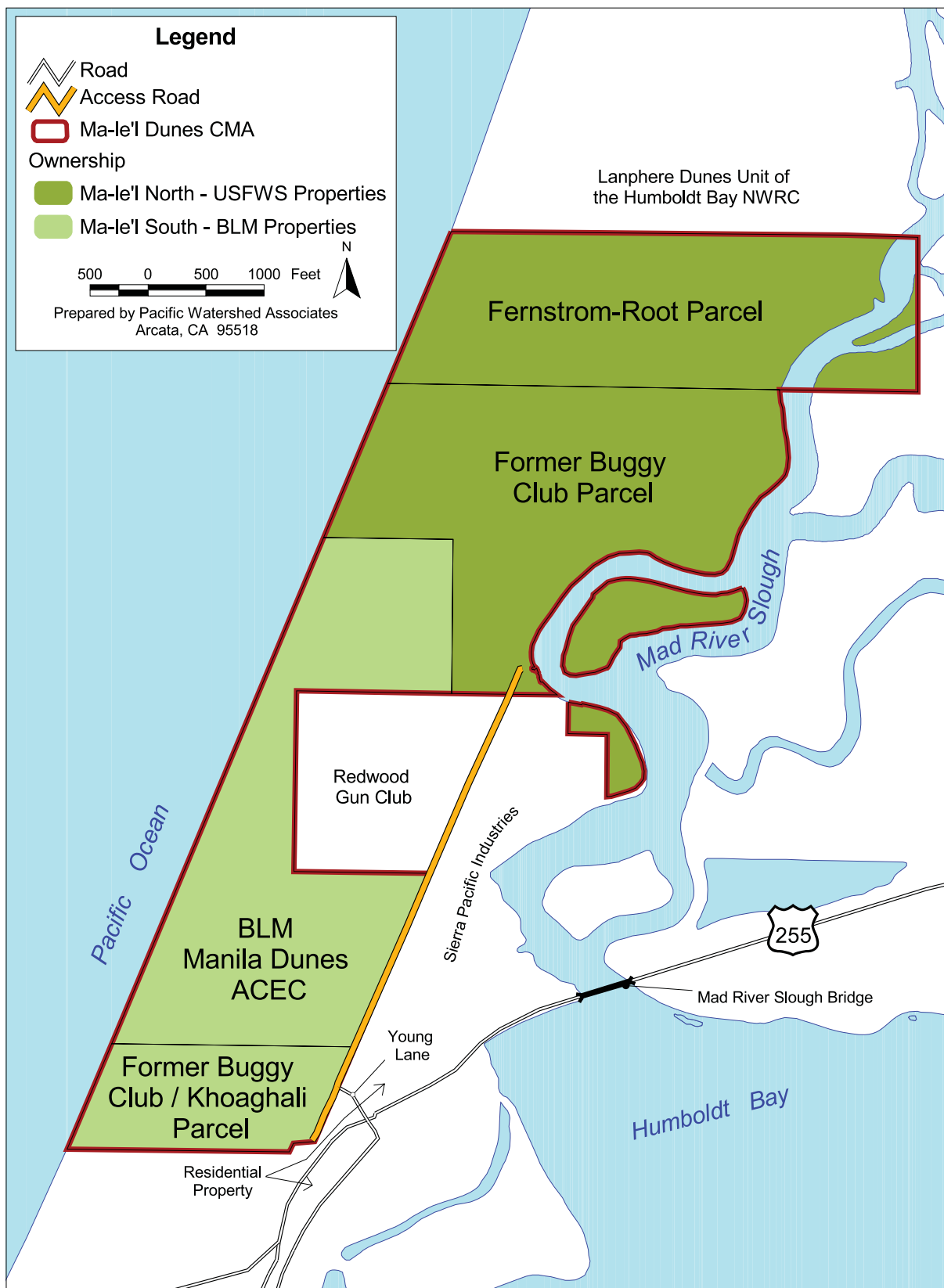


Figure 1-2. Ma-le'l Dunes CMA Map

1.4 Project Stakeholders

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is associated with various entities that own or manage property or programs immediately adjacent to it and therefore have a vested interest in the management and use of the area. In addition to BLM and USFWS, these entities include the Wiyot Tribe, Friends of the Dunes (FOD), Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), Redwood Gun Club (RGC), Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD), and adjacent residents. Below is a discussion of each entity and its relationship to the cooperative access planning process.

1.4.1 Land Holding Agencies

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA properties fall within the BLM Samoa Peninsula Management Area under the guidance of the BLM Arcata Resource Management Plan. It is the agency's overarching mission to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The BLM-owned parcels of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA will allow for limited recreational activities as defined in their Arcata Resource Management Plan and subsequent amendments, and on the uses outlined in this Plan.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (USFWS-Humboldt Bay NWRC)

The USFWS-Humboldt Bay NWRC was established with the mission to protect fish and wildlife resources of national importance while providing opportunities for the public to appreciate and enjoy the natural heritage of the Humboldt Bay region. Along with other public and private lands around Humboldt Bay, Humboldt Bay NWRC helps this area remain one of the key points for the millions of migratory birds that rely on the Pacific Flyway. The refuge includes the Lanphere Dunes Unit which is immediately north of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA. It contains the most pristine remaining dune ecosystem in the Pacific Northwest and supports rare and representative examples of older forested dunes, young active dunes, dune swale wetlands, and coastal salt marsh. With the recent transfer of the adjoining former Humboldt Buggy parcel to the south by the Center for Natural Lands Management, the USFWS-Humboldt Bay NWRC has been expanded by 160 acres. This 160 acres is being combined with 130 acres of dune and forested dune habitat that was previously managed as part of the Lanphere Unit. Combined, the 290 acres are being managed as the USFWS-Humboldt Bay NWRC Ma-le'l Dunes Unit and are synonymous with the Ma-le'l North properties of the



Ma-le'l Dunes CMA. Public use of the new unit is based on a pre-aquisition compatibility determination (discussed further in section 2.3.1) and the uses outlined in this Plan.

1.4.2 Other Stakeholders

Table Bluff Reservation-Wiyot Tribe (Wiyot Tribe)

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is located within the ancestral territory of the Wiyot Tribe, whose people and ancestors have inhabited the Humboldt Bay region for over a thousand years. Within their large coastal territory, which historically extended from Little River to Bear River, and inland to the first set of mountains, the Wiyot were able to hunt and gather a wide variety of plant and animal resources. Today, the Wiyot people continue to live throughout the Humboldt Bay region and continue to fish and gather materials here. The Wiyot Tribe has over 500 members, over 60 of which live on the Table Bluff Reservation located in Loleta, along the shores of southern Humboldt Bay. Many of the other local tribes have members of mixed Wiyot ancestry.

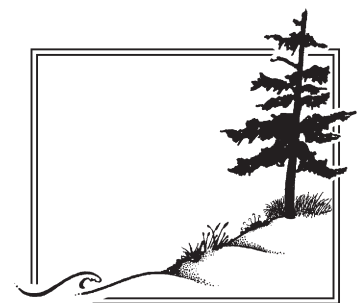
Several Wiyot villages are known to have existed along the northern spit of Humboldt Bay. Therefore, the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA vicinity has cultural and historical significance to the Wiyot Tribe. The Tribe would like to ensure the protection of the cultural resources that exist within the area and maintain their right to access and gather plant resources traditionally used for food, fiber, and medicine.



Table Bluff Reservation Wiyot Tribe

Friends of the Dunes (FOD)

FOD is a local non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of coastal bay and dune environments through community-supported education and stewardship programs. Their stewardship program consists of involving community volunteers in restoring coastal dune habitats; creating cooperative relations with coastal landowners, conservation organizations, and management agencies to promote the implementation and development of ecologically sound management practices; and advocating for coastal land use that is consistent with the ecological values of native coastal dune systems. In addition, FOD now serves as a land trust, able to receive donations of coastal properties and conservation easements. FOD plays a lead role in dune-related environmental education and awareness and is actively involved in restoration and education programs at the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA. FOD has also provided extensive planning assistance in the development of this Plan.



Friends of the
DUNES

Redwood Gun Club (RGC)

RGC is a non-profit, public range facility where local community members can learn proper firearms handling, hunter safety, firearms marksmanship, and practice the various competitive shooting disciplines in a safe and organized environment. The RGC owns property that is situated on the west side of the Ma-le'l Dunes access road between Ma-le'l North and Ma-le'l South. The club will share the access road with Ma-le'l Dunes visitors and has been actively engaged in access planning in order to promote public safety and awareness, as well as roadway maintenance.

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI)

SPI Arcata Division Sawmill is located on New Navy Base Road (Highway 255) at the northwest end of Arcata Bay and to the west of Mad River Slough. The facility stores, manufactures, and distributes wood products that are manufactured from logs harvested from various domestic timberlands in the coastal region. The site was undeveloped land, consisting of sand dunes and mud flats, until approximately 1950 when SPI converted it into a lumber mill. The mill site was expanded in 1971 and operations continue today. Log decks line the western boundary of the mill site and lie adjacent to a significant stretch of the USFWS-owned access road, across from RGC property. Safety and trespassing issues in relation to recreational visitors is a concern for SPI.

Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD)

HBMWD is a wholesale water agency that serves the greater Humboldt Bay area including the cities of Eureka, Arcata and Blue Lake, as well as Community Service Districts serving unincorporated areas such as McKinleyville, Cutten, Fairhaven, Fieldbrook, Glendale and Manila. The HBMWD operates an underground industrial pipeline that runs north-south along the Samoa Peninsula, through a portion of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA, and terminates at the Trusdale Pump Station on the east side of Humboldt Bay. The pipeline carries filtered water that serves as an alternate water supply for the City of Eureka. HBMWD staff access the pipeline easement within the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA for monthly maintenance inspections. District staff regularly access the easement via the RGC property. HBMWD has an interest in preserving the integrity of the pipeline from potential impacts associated with recreational use at Ma-le'l Dunes CMA.

Adjacent Residents/Landowners

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA lies in the community services district of the unincorporated town of Manila. Approximately ten private residences are situated immediately adjacent to the CMA along Young Lane and the Ma-le'l

Dunes access road. Any changes in recreational use levels and patterns will have a direct impact on this residential neighborhood. Resident concerns were paramount in addressing safety and visitor access flow in the Plan.

1.5 Planning Process for the Public Access Plan

In 2003, the SCC allocated funds to prepare a Ma-le'l Dunes CMA public access plan that would evaluate past and current uses of the properties within the project area and make recommendations for future access and improvements to support such access. In October 2004, HWR Engineering and Science with FOD were engaged by the SCC and began collaborating with BLM and USFWS staff and local stakeholders. The planning effort was executed by (including but not limited to) the following steps:

- Tours of respective properties with agencies and subsequent meetings with agency staff to identify cooperative management opportunities, expectations, and issues.
- Inventory of opportunities and constraints; evaluation of existing infrastructure via several site visits; compilation of biological data, and review of existing educational brochures and applicable regional planning documents.
- Outreach to various stakeholder groups including: 1) Dunes Forum members (which included members of the Humboldt Coastal Coalition and other citizen groups) via representation at Dunes Forum regular meetings; 2) representatives of the Wiyot Tribe; 3) "large" adjacent land owners (RGC, HBMWD, SPI) via a special meeting; and 4) residents living adjacent to or along Young Lane via a special meeting. During the outreach efforts and meetings, handouts and maps describing the project area were distributed, access plan process and goals were reviewed, and stakeholder concerns were solicited and recorded.
- Follow-up telephone interviews and written correspondence with members of stakeholder groups.
- Coordination of a topographic survey and production of topographic and GIS maps of the area.
- Consultations with regulatory agencies, including USFWS, California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Coastal Commission.
- Creation of draft recommendations and, where appropriate, conceptual specifications.
- Review of public access plan recommendations by BLM, FWS and the SCC.

1.6 Environmental Compliance

Several environmental compliance requirements already have been fully or partially completed for the project. These include the Ma-le'l Dunes Access Improvements Environmental Assessment (USDI-BLM, 2004a) and the Biological Assessment for the Ma-le'l Dunes Access Improvements for Interim Management (USDI-BLM, 2004b), which were completed in July 2004 as part of the establishment of a parking and day use picnic area in the Ma-le'l South portion of the CMA. The documents evaluated the improvements listed below and found that they would not have any significant adverse impacts to the human or physical environment. These improvements are considered *existing conditions* within this plan.

- Improved access route
- New entrance gate
- Day use picnic area
- Picnic tables
- Grills
- Vault toilet
- Information kiosk
- Signs
- Delineating existing hiking trails (as per Figure 2 of EA AR-04-14)
- Delineating existing equestrian trails (as per Figure 2 of EA AR-04-14)
- Horse access on designated trails only
- Prohibition of OHV, firearms
- Removing old pavilion, fences

In order to meet state and federal environmental review requirements, a joint California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document has been prepared and is a companion document to this Plan. It evaluates and discloses potential environmental impacts of the proposed improvements and is entitled the Ma-le'l Dunes Initial Study (IS)/Environmental Assessment (EA).

The continued operation of the existing access improvements and land use allocations at Ma-le'l South, including those listed above, will undergo environmental review along with the actions proposed in this Plan. The implementation of this Plan has been designed to avoid any un-mitigatable significant impacts, as defined under CEQA and NEPA. It is anticipated that environmental impacts will be addressed within a joint Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) prepared pursuant to CEQA and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) prepared pursuant to NEPA.

Specific permits, authorizations, and notifications anticipated to be required for implementation of this Plan include the following:

- Biological Opinion from USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act;

- Consistency Determination from California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) under Section 2080.1 of the California Endangered Species Act;
- Nationwide 36 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers;
- Consistency Determination from the California Coastal Commission;
- Permit from the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District; and
- Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act consultation
- Section 305 Consultation concurrent with Section 7 with National Marine Fisheries Service
- Fish & Game Code Sections 3503 and 3503.5 Bird Nest Protection such as osprey consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game
- Fish & Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050 and 5515 fully protected animals consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game
- Section 307 permit for projects located within the Coastal Zone with the California Coastal Commission
- Section 401 Water Quality Certification with the North Coastal Regional Water Quality Control Board
- General Construction Water Discharge Requirements for construction activities covering over one acre. with the State Water Resources Board
- Section 106 consultation for record search and Field Surveys with the State and Tribal Preservation Office

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